

Opinion Editorial by Senate President Tom Lee and House Speaker Allan Bense

The Florida Legislature is considering ideas to address the future of Medicaid with the goal of ensuring quality of care, improving efficiency in the delivery of services, and facilitating sustainable growth in Medicaid expenditures.

To encourage public participation in the process, the Senate and House Select Committees on Medicaid Reform are jointly conducting a series of public hearings throughout the state.

The purpose of the public hearing is to gather information from Medicaid recipients, health care providers, and other interested parties who may be affected by changes to Florida's Medicaid program. We need your innovative ideas on how to reduce the rapid growth in Medicaid expenditures while continuing to provide needed services to Florida's low-income, elderly, and disabled. The Committees will also solicit input on the Governor's proposal to reform Medicaid.

The hearings will begin with an overview of the goals of the Select Committees. Members of the public then will be invited to speak. If you want to address the Committees, you will need to sign in before the meeting; doors will open 45 minutes prior to the hearing. Those who do not wish to speak do not need to register.

In order to maximize the opportunity for public testimony, legislators will not take questions or engage in debate during the hearing. Also, the length of time each speaker will be given depends on the number of people who wish to speak. However, written comments and backup material are welcome.

A special accommodation request for persons with disability should be made 48 hours prior to the scheduled time for the hearing. Please contact the Senate Sergeant's office at (850) 487-5224.

Please remember this is only one of many ways you can participate in the discussion on Medicaid. First, we encourage you to contact your local State Senator and Representative, since it is through them that your voice can most clearly be heard in the Legislature.

You can also find up-to-date information relating to changes to Medicaid on both the Senate and House Select Committees' Web pages which can be accessed through the legislative Web site at www.leg.state.fl.us.

We hope you will join us at this forum so that together we can ensure the long-term success of Medicaid in Florida.